

# Devotions for a Revolutionary Year

∞ 365 DAYS OF JESUS' RADICAL LOVE FOR YOU

LYNN COWELL

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To my kids—Zach, Mariah, and Madi—my prayer is that you will hunger for God and his Word more than anything else. Always remember: “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world” (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*).



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While all the stories and quotations in this book are true, in some instances names and details have been changed in order to protect the identities of those involved.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

# Contents

**Introduction:** Revolutionary Love ..... 4



## PART ONE: *His Heart Toward Me*

**Chapter 1:** He Wants Me ..... 6

**Chapter 2:** He Knows Me ..... 47

**Chapter 3:** He Speaks to Me ..... 88



## PART TWO: *His Path for Me*

**Chapter 4:** I Need Him ..... 130

**Chapter 5:** I Go After Him ..... 171

**Chapter 6:** I Honor Him ..... 212



## PART THREE: *His Hopes for Me*

**Chapter 7:** We Protect Together ..... 254

**Chapter 8:** We Relate Together ..... 295

**Chapter 9:** We Love Together ..... 336



**Author Chat** ..... 379

# Introduction: Revolutionary Love

**I**nfatuation is a powerful thing. It has the power to make your mind, body, and heart soar. Then, faster than you can say your ex-boyfriend's name, it can drop you, leaving you sick to your stomach.

There *is* something more powerful—revolutionary love. Love that is perfect, unconditional, stable. Love that is not based on what you did for it yesterday or what you can do for it in the future. This love is unlike any you've encountered. This love forgives and forgets the past while promising an amazing future. This love is Jesus.

If you are a girl who wants more—more confidence, more security, more hope—this is the perfect book for you.

This book isn't going to radically change you. Only one book can do that—the Bible. My book simply gives you a diving board to help spring you into the pool of God's Word, where you can swim by yourself!

I hope you've already read *His Revolutionary Love: Jesus' Radical Pursuit of You*—that's what we're building on. But even if you haven't, you can dive in with us now. For the next 365 days, we're going to dig deeper into Jesus' love letters to us. Don't just read the devotions—I want you to get out your Bible; read the key verse each day, and read the verses before and after it. Take some time to figure out exactly what God is saying to you.

This year, we're going to let God **start the revolution** in our hearts, making us radical girls who can change our world for his honor.

So glad to be on this journey with you!



*Jesus, thank you for choosing us. Your love is what our hearts have always craved—the only love that can fill them. Change us. Make us radical so we can share your love with others. In your powerful name, amen.*

# 1: How Much?

*This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.*

—John 3:16 (*The Message*)



What was at the top of your Christmas list last year? The newest boots? Apple's hottest phone?

If you could ask for something that money can't buy, what would that be? Your parents reunited? Your sister back home?

What extreme measures would you be willing to take to get your heart's desire? Move to a new city and have your family start over? Sell everything to put your sister in rehab?

Would you die?

Would you die to see their lives changed?

Jesus' answer was yes. He thought of you and what it would take for you to have new life in him. "Yes, I'll die to make that happen," was his response to his Father's request.

Talk about love! Talk about a hero!

I responded to his yes by saying yes back. Yes to receiving forgiveness and choosing his way instead of mine. Yes to having him revolutionize the way I think, act, and live.

When he died, he proved how much he wants us—me and you. The real question now is, **how much do you want him?**

Show him you want him too. Take time this year to go after him. Learn how crazy Jesus is about you. And become crazy about him!



## START THE REVOLUTION

Read John 3:16.

Ask: Am I ready to say yes to God's love for me?

*Jesus, I am ready—ready to find out just how much you love me and to really love you in return. Help me to come to you each day. I can't wait to discover more about you! Amen.*

CHAPTER ONE



## 2: Absolutely Beautiful

*Has anyone ever seen anything like this—dawn-fresh, moon-lovely, sun-radiant, ravishing as the night sky with its galaxies of stars?*

—Song of Solomon 6:10 (*The Message*)



**N**ave you ever heard of someone choosing his wife when he's in sixth grade? Crazy, I know! That's exactly what Greg did! He saw a girl singing a solo in church and wrote in his Bible, "I, Greg, will marry her—to be stopped by nobody!" If only he had known . . . she didn't even know his name!

Sounds like the beginning of a long romance, right? Not! Greg found her number. Called a few times. After a bit, the crush burned out . . . for *him*. Not for *her*. Why? She didn't even really know him. But she had wanted to be wanted, and he at one point wanted her. You know, it didn't even have to be Greg. She just wanted to be wanted again.

That girl was me, and that crush crushed me. I asked myself, "What's wrong with me? My body—my flat chest? My personality or faith?" Whatever it was, I felt ruined.

Have you ever been on the wrong end of a love equation?

### **Guy + Me = Value?**

The fact was, and still is, there was nothing wrong with me. There is nothing wrong with you.

Jesus tells me I am beautiful . . . every part of me. Maybe at that time I wasn't Greg's type. But in Song of Solomon, a book that is often used as a metaphor for God's love for us, we read these words: "The feelings I get when I see the high mountain ranges . . . remind me of you, and I'm spoiled for anyone else! Your beauty, within and without, is absolute, dear lover, close companion" (7:5, 6, *The Message*). Jesus loves my outsides and insides! (Sounds like Greg was the one missing out!)

Don't let any guy define you. Don't let his rejection or acceptance determine whether or not you think you are beautiful. The Perfect Love says you are absolutely beautiful; listen closely to *that* truth.



### **START THE REVOLUTION**

Look in the mirror and say:  
"Jesus thinks  
I'm beautiful."



*Jesus, you and your love are all I want  
to define me. Amen.*

### 3: Priceless

*I paid a huge price for you. . . . That's how much you mean to me!  
That's how much I love you! I'd sell off the whole world to  
get you back, trade the creation just for you.*

—Isaiah 43:3, 4 (*The Message*)



When Prince William and Kate got married, it was like watching a Disney fairytale movie in real life. Except, perhaps, for all the press. Reporters commented on the price tag of everything—Kate's gown, shoes, ring, flowers, etc. Until they came to the tiara.

"Priceless."

That's how they described her gorgeous headpiece. Given to Queen Elizabeth as a gift for her eighteenth birthday, this diamond tiara was on loan to the princess-to-be. No price tag could be put on the brilliant crown; it was impossible to replace. If it should somehow disappear, Scotland Yard would be all over London in a heartbeat.

In the end though, the tiara is still just a super fancy hat. A thing that can be lost or stolen.

That's so very different from you. Why? Because **Jesus gave his everything, his very life, to make you his.**

The girl who understands just how much she is wanted is a girl who can be fully confident—empowered to make every decision a wise one, because she knows her decisions matter. A girl who knows that she is priceless is a girl who will never settle for anything short of the best from the one who loves her the most. A girl who is sure that she is cherished and adored is a girl who no longer worries about herself; her focus is on sharing this radical love with all those she comes in contact with. *You* can be that girl.



#### START THE REVOLUTION

Look up the price of the biggest diamond. You're worth more than that!



*Jesus—help me to get this message. Help me to appreciate the price you paid for me. Amen.*

## 7: You Belong

*And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people.*

*He did this so we would praise and glorify him.*

—Ephesians 1:13, 14 (NLT)



I couldn't care less if Greg's ring on my finger looked ridiculous. It made the statement: "I belong to him." That's what mattered.

Have you ever wanted something that said you belonged? The softball team sweatshirt? The personalized chamber music folder? Your new dad's last name?

**You do belong.** Just as Greg's class ring was my identity marker, the Holy Spirit *in* you can be your identity marker. His presence says you belong to the one who is perfect and who loves perfectly too!

"How does the Holy Spirit do that?" you ask.

Here's how I think it happens. Have you ever had a sense of the right thing to do? The Holy Spirit was leading.

Ever had strength for something scary? The Holy Spirit brought his peace. Ever ready to explode, yet somehow you kept your cool? The Holy Spirit brought self-control.

Sometimes we don't recognize him; we think it's us. Just because we don't recognize his voice and direction, that doesn't make it any less him.

Most things in life we belong to come to an end. You and your boyfriend break up, cross-country season wraps up, and the curtains close on the play.

Not so with the Holy Spirit. He is one who never leaves, a season without end, and a play acted out eternally. Once you receive the Holy Spirit, you are forever his.



### START THE REVOLUTION

Design an infinity symbol sticker with the words "Holy Spirit" in it.

*Holy Spirit, today I'll need something: an answer, or hope, or direction. Help me look to you and see your presence as my identity marker. I belong to you. Amen.*

## 5: Treasured

*“On the day when I act,” says the LORD Almighty, “they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him.”*

—Malachi 3:17



The tornado ruined *everything*. As Kim and Brenda approached the place that had once been their parents' home, nothing was there. No front door. No furniture. . . . No parents. *Everything* was destroyed.

In the days ahead, possessions of their parents began to slowly surface. Papers in a field. A quilt in a tree. Each one was a treasure to my friends because each item represented what my friends no longer had.

I wonder if God ever feels that way about his creation. When he looks at the earth where selfishness and sin rule, does he ever feel brokenhearted over the destruction that lies where beauty once was?

On that day when Christ returns to the earth, we, his followers, will be his treasured possession. When he returns to the earth, the sight of us will bring him joy and comfort. The *King James Version* of Malachi 3:17 calls us God's "jewels."

**Does your life reflect that you are God's treasured possession?** When God's eyes roam the earth, does it bring his heart so much joy to see you—the jewel among the wreckage?

Once, I would have said no. A tornado of a broken relationship left a hole in my heart. I let my problems define who I was. Learning that God treasured me brought me hope, causing me to shine like the jewel he says I am.

You are his treasured possession. Today, look at your world through the eyes of someone who is deeply cherished.



### START THE REVOLUTION

Think of someone you treasure. Tell them about it today!



*Spy on your life for the next twenty-four hours. How is God telling you "You are my treasured possession"? Make these revelations your prayer of thanks to him.*

## C: Real Peace

*The tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.*

—Luke 1:78, 79



**N**aving just left my dying father's hospital room, I searched in vain for my car in the parking deck. Twenty-four hours of visitation left me exhausted, both mentally and physically. It was my birthday, yet there wasn't anything happy about it.

There is no way I could have prepared for that day; it's a strange sensation to take care of your dad. Feelings of being robbed overwhelmed me. I was too young not to have a dad.

Climbing into my car, I felt tears streaming down my face. As soon as I turned the key, lyrics from the radio spoke of a day when going to Heaven would bring our new bodies—ultimate healing.

Jesus came into my car that day. He reached down into my pit of despair. He made it clear to me that he was real and Heaven is real too.

That peace stayed through the day Dad died, the day of his funeral, and every day since. **His perfect love flowing down to imperfect me quiets the fear of the future and the pain of the past.**

I know there are days when you feel that life is not fair, maybe even hopeless. At times like these, when we don't feel Jesus' love for us, our faith can be built stronger. We can learn to depend on him no matter how we feel.



### START THE REVOLUTION

What song brings you peace? Sing it today.

*Jesus, no matter how I feel, help me to remember the peace you want to give me through your perfect love.  
Amen.*

## 7: Eyes on You

*But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love.*

—Psalm 33:18



Isn't it a strange feeling when someone is staring at you? Sometimes you can't tell why. Is there something in your hair or on your shirt? You start to wonder, *What's wrong with me?*

Today, my friend was staring at my mouth. Finally she said, "You have something green in between your teeth." Ugh! How embarrassing!

Jesus stares at me too, but not like my friend! He is looking at me as one who fears him and hopes in his unfailing love. *Fear* in today's verse is a good thing; it means "worship." He looks at me because I worship him.

Verse 19 of this Psalm says his eyes are on his people "to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine." His eyes are on me because he wants to take care of me and keep me from harm.

Jesus is looking at you today. He is fully aware of the situation you are in. He sees you feeling so alone in school. He knows you want so much to live for him.

**He knows you struggle.**

But even if you completely mess up today and make everyone mad and upset, his eyes are still on you. Not eyes of disgust at your shortcomings. Not eyes rolling as he thinks, *She did it again?!* His eyes are eyes of love. He wants to help you. He wants to keep you alive, not just in body, but in mind and spirit too.



### START THE REVOLUTION

Have a staring contest with a friend. Jesus can keep his eyes on you forever!

*Let the truth that Jesus is looking at you with eyes of love give you strength. Thank him for having his eyes on you.*

## 8: Perfection

*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

—1 John 4:18



“**J**here is no way he could love me.” Allison had done a lot of stuff—bad stuff. Stuff she had grown up learning was wrong, and yet she had done it anyway.

Now her friend Lindsay was trying to tell her that Jesus loved her and still wanted a relationship with her. Allison just couldn’t believe that could be true. She knew what her parents would do if they found out; they’d kick her out. If her parents would respond that way, how could she expect anything else from a perfect God?

I’ll be the first to admit it: **it’s hard to understand a love that loves no matter what.** We fear coming to him in all of our mess. He is perfect and holy. We are not. It’s hard to fathom that no matter what we do, he will still love us and want to have a relationship with us.

That is why his love is so revolutionary. Nothing can taint it, because it originates from the one who is perfect. Knowing he loves us this way, because of what he has done and in spite of what we have done, gives us the confidence to come to him, even when we are messed up.

It is here, living in his love, that we are forgiven, given another chance, and eventually perfected. Yes, you heard me—I said *perfected*. That is exactly what the Father wants to do with you. He doesn’t want to make you just OK. He wants to take away your sin—those things that drive you *from* him—and perfect you, drawing you *to* him.



### START THE REVOLUTION

Try to draw a perfect circle.

Write in the circle what to do to get closer to Jesus.

*Jesus, I want to be rid of \_\_\_\_\_.*  
*(Name the thing that separates you from him.)*  
*Please forgive me and perfect me! Amen.*

## *D: Poor in Spirit, Rich in Love*

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

—Matthew 5:3



**P**oor in spirit. That sure doesn't sound like something I want to be! I want to be confident and have great self-esteem. I want to feel good about how I look, be proud of what I do, and be surrounded by people who like me. Doesn't everybody?

Michelle shared with me on Facebook: "Society wants us to be flawless. We compare ourselves to models. *Now* I know that Jesus thinks I am flawless. He knows me very well. . . . I don't need to try to be perfect for anybody here on earth, because my heavenly Father has an unconditional love that can forgive anything. That's what I love about Jesus. He loves me no matter what. It's hard to try to live without noticing my 'imperfections' . . . I want Jesus to be my everything."

Michelle was "poor in spirit," but this was a great place to be! Why? It caused her to reach out to Jesus. Now what does she have? Confidence and a positive outlook that cannot be taken from her. Her hope is not based on her appearance, accomplishments, or attributes. Her confidence is in Jesus' view of her as flawless (Song of Solomon 4:7).

Let's get this straight—we all have flaws. (Yes, even those supermodels in the magazines.) We all make mistakes. We all sin. But when Jesus looks at us with his kingdom perspective, **he sees who we really are and what we can be**—what we are made to be. And that is flawless.

When we are helpless to feel good about ourselves, that is the perfect time for Jesus to come in with his truth. We can move from being girls whose lives are based on this passing world to girls who are focused on what lasts forever, the kingdom of Heaven. We can go from being poor imitations to experiencing the richness Jesus has to offer. This is when we truly become radical girls!



### **START THE REVOLUTION**

Avoid looking  
in the mirror  
today. Just be  
confident in  
Jesus' view  
of you!

*Jesus, I struggle a lot with my self-esteem. I want to believe the truth—that you see me as flawless. Amen.*

## 10: Near

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

—Ephesians 2:13



**S**ad. No explanation. Just sad. There are times when I have wanted to climb back in bed, pull the covers up over my head, and just stay there. Because I have soaked my heart in God's Word, it begins to talk to me: "Why are you sad? You have so much to be thankful for!" I know this is true. Yet sometimes it's easier said than felt.

On hard days, I remind myself that although I change—my heart and mind swinging back and forth—Jesus' love for me doesn't. It is constant and stable.

Christ has already done all that needs to be done to draw me close to him. Whether my feelings tell me today that I am loved and Jesus is with me, or whether they lie and tell me I'm on my own and have no hope, it doesn't change Jesus' location. **My feelings cannot move him away from me.**

Paul told the Ephesians that all of us were "dead in transgressions" at one time. Another version puts it this way: "You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2, 3, *The Message*). But even when we were filled with sin, God took us in and, through Jesus' death and resurrection, made us alive and drew us close to him again. We didn't do anything to get God to do this for us, and nothing we do can change it. All we have to do is accept it. And if we do that, as Paul also wrote, then we are members of God's household (2:19): "You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone."

So on the hard days, when my emotions threaten to rock my world, I can cling to Jesus who is near and tell my feelings to quit lying. I belong with him.



### START THE REVOLUTION

Use a dry-erase marker to write on your mirror: "People in this mirror may be closer to Jesus than they appear."



*Jesus, no matter how I feel, please remind me that you are near. Amen.*

# I love you. I love you.

Jesus is sending you a message every day. Have you got it?



God knows being a girl is not all hearts and flowers.  
Words can sting. Hearts can break. Life can be . . . complicated.  
But Jesus' radical love for you can change everything!

Filled with biblical truth, down-to-your-shoes advice, and real girls' stories, *Devotions for a Revolutionary Year* is for the girl who wants to:

- walk in confidence instead of running scared
- reach for the best instead of settling for less
- stick to boundaries instead of abandoning her self
- know true love instead of being fooled by false hopes

Jesus is sending you a message. Read it every day and get ready for a revolution in you. And to go deeper still, read *His Revolutionary Love* (ISBN 978-0-7847-2981-6).



“Lynn knows how to connect with the heart of today’s teen girls and unpack the real issues in a relevant, fun way.”

— **Lysa TerKeurst**, New York Times bestselling author of *Made to Crave*



**Lynn Cowell, author of *His Revolutionary Love*, is also a speaker with Proverbs 31 Ministries. Through her Revolutionary Love conferences, Lynn helps set girls on the path toward wise choices by leading them to the only love that can fill the love gap in their hearts.**

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